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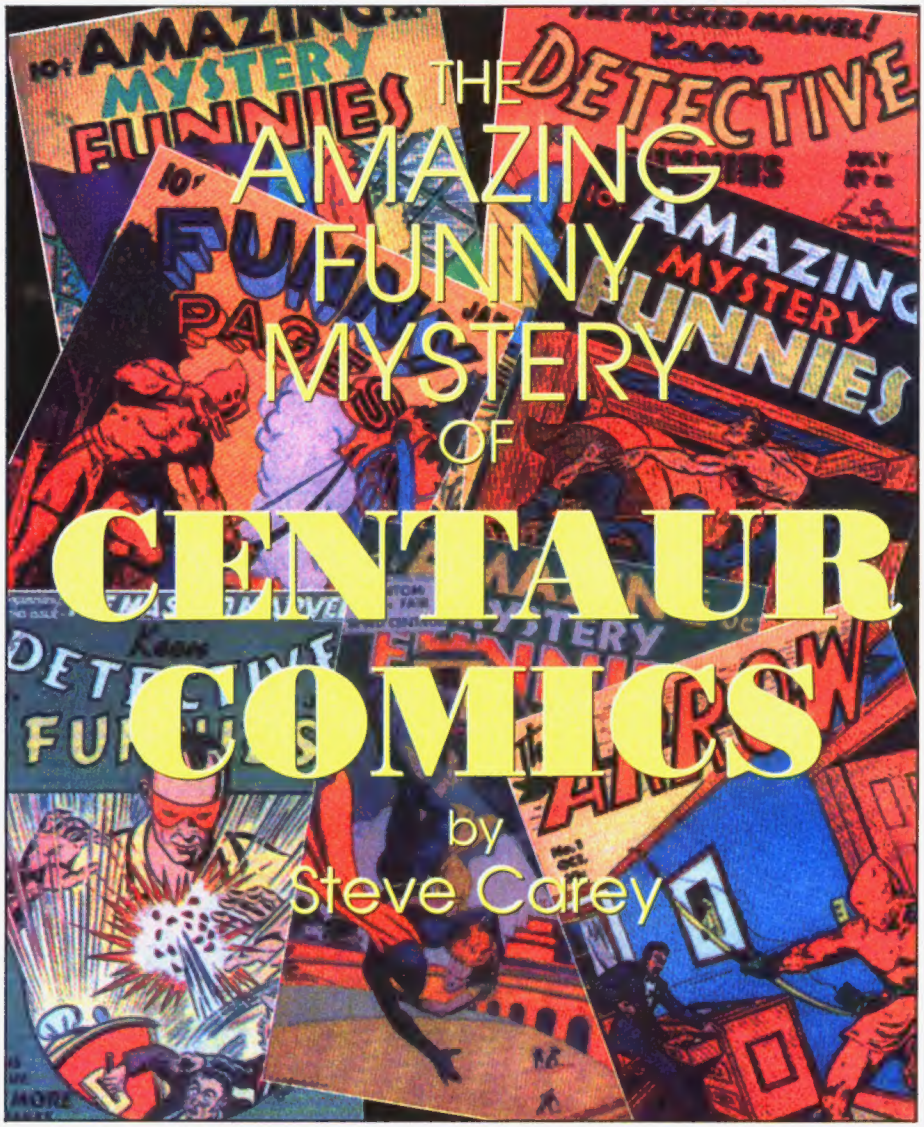

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THE AMAZING FUNNY MYSTERY OF CENTAUR COMICS

by
Steve Carey

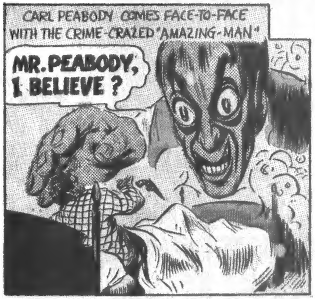
It's **amazing** how most histories of Golden Age of comic books have, for the most part, neglected the Centaur line. It's **funny** that many collectors today consider these books to be so esoteric and sought after by only an elite group of collectors. This is certainly not because Centaurs lack quality or historical importance, but because many collectors are simply unfamiliar with this early entry into the field of comic book publishing! Often, Centaurs present a real **mystery** to comic book historians and collectors for several reason. Sporadic distribution plagued the Centaur titles since their inception, thus making them difficult to locate on the newsstands and in the drugstores of the late 1930's. Couple this with the demise of the company in early 1942 (just when comics were getting into full swing) and the fact that none of their characters achieved any form of prominence or longevity, and it's no wonder that most Centaurs are scarce and difficult to locate. In spite of all this, however, once a collector discovers the tremendous talent pool that produced these incredible books, and explores a few of the great features contained in the line, collecting interest is almost always aroused.

Centaur officially set up shop in the opening months of 1938, continuiong runs of titles inherited from the Chesler group. Star Comics, Funny Pages, and Funny picture Stories were early efforts that contained features of the usual variety, namely western shorts, detective dramas, and slapstick humor. Though some of the individual pieces could prove to be interesting, most of the work at this stage was generally crude, and in no way could compete with the popular strip reprints of the day. To their credit, the folks at Centaur realized that they needed more punch, and the first in a series of classic creations began to spring forth.

Amazing Mystery Funnies #1 was launched in the summer of 1938, sporting a simple cover by a then unknown artist named Bill Everett, whose science fiction serial "Skyrocket Steele" began in the next issue. While Everett's art on this feature was not as refined as some of his subsequent work, say on the immortal "Submariner" for example, he was nonetheless able to convey a certain flair and youthful exuberance to the strip. Aided by a pre "Human Torch" Carl Burgos, (who contributed another interesting sci-fi series entitled "Air-Sub DX"). and several beautiful backup stories rendered by all time great Fred Guardineer, *Amazing Mystery Funnies* started to gel. It was with the July 1939 (vol. 2 #7) issue, however, that this tiltle really began to take off when Paul Gustavson's "Fantom of the Fair" crashed upon the scene. A true mystery man, the Fantom foiled nefarious plots designed to interfere with the 1940 New York World's Fair, where his incredible acrobatic abilities came in handy. Dwelling in a cavern beneath the grounds, (not unlike another "Phantom" that most of us are familiar with) this Fantom was always the man on the spot, and his daring rescues often proved to be quite exciting. Credit must go to the sweeping style used by artist Gustavson, who was a prolific, yet capable illustrator. His most well known feature, the "Angel", was never more than a backup in *Marvel Mystery Comics*, but here the Fantom was the star, and Gustavson responded accordingly. After the closing of the festivities, the Fantom ventured elsewhere to confront the monster makers of the world until his cancellation in the final issue (#24) of the run, though he did live briefly on in a couple of reprint issues under the *Fantoman* title.

Gustavson was also responsible for creating the brutal "Arrow", which debuted in late summer of 1938 in the vol. 2 #10 issue of *Funny Pages*. A top flight feature, the Arrow was cast in the swashbuckler mold. He carried a quiver and a bow instead of a sword, and would drill evildoers unmercifully, if the opportunity presented itself. Adept at fisticuffs as well, the Arrow posed a double

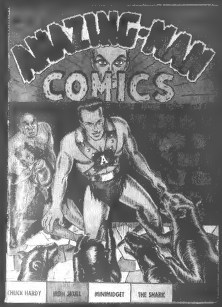
threat to criminals, something of a cross between William Tell and Charles Bronson. Unfortunately, Centaur did not fully appreciate the powerful impact of this character, and the Arrow did not even make a cover appearance until the tenth issue (vol. 3 #7) after his first arrival. The supporting material in these early issues of *Funny Pages* was generally below par, so the Arrow basically stood alone until late in 1939 when some nice features kicked in. Most notable were the "Mad Ming" stories done by artist Harold DeLay. An oriental "menace" with a humanistic slant, Ming hatched his criminal conspiracies upon the world in an almost lighthearted manner. Even when he tried to clean up his act, Ming was tortured and blackmailed by his cohorts, who could not stand the thought of losing him. Despite some shorts contributed by Tarpe Mills, and even two "Indian Magic" stories done by the redoubtable Jack Cole, *Funny Pages* terminated with its' 42nd issue in October 1940. The Arrow also lived on in several



AMAZING MAN DISPLAYS HIS DARK SIDE, COMPLIMENTS OF BILL EVERETT (FROM ISSUE #6)

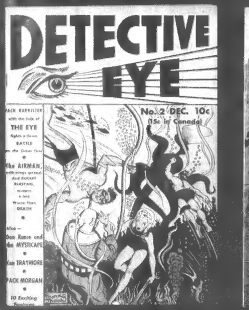
OUTSIDE, WITHIN HEARING DISTANCE, STANDS A MAN WHO'S LAW IS CHALLANGED BY NO ONE — "THE ARROW"
I THOUGHT THE INDIAN WARS WERE OVER LONG AGO!?
LOOK—THERE'S A NOTE TIED TO THAT ARROW!
PUPPET'S PLAY IS FOR FOOLS! TREASON IS ANSWERED BY ONLY ONE THING—WHICH YOU KNOW! MURDER IS PENALIZED BY DEATH! I SHALL RETURN FOR YOU SHORTLY— "THE ARROW"

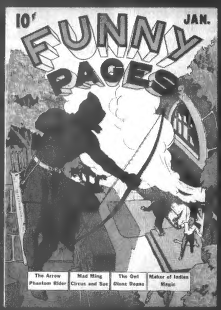
THE ARROW INTRODUCES HIMSELF IN UNFORGETTABLE FASHION (Reprinted from FANTOMAN #2)

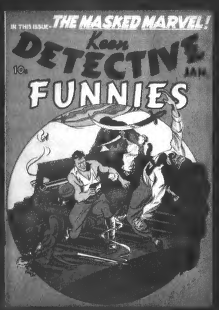

AMAZING-MAN
COMICS
CHUCK HANDY
IRON JAWED
MINIMIDGET
THE SHARP

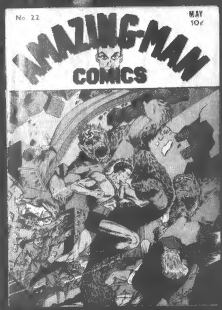
MASKED MARVEL
No. 1
SEPT.
10¢

Keen
DETECTIVE
FUNNIES
10¢
INTRODUCING
AIR MAN


DETECTIVE
EYE
No. 2 DEC. 10¢
15¢ in Canada!
THE EYE
THE AIRMAN
Also —
THE WRAITHER
ACE MORGAN


10¢
FUNNY
PAGES
JAN.
The Arrow
Phantom Rider
Mad Ming
Circus and Taxi
The Owl
Ghost Rogue
Maker of Indian
Magic


IN THIS ISSUE—THE MASKED MARVEL!
Keen
DETECTIVE
FUNNIES
10¢
JAN.


No. 12
MAY
10¢
AMAZING-MAN
COMICS

AMAZING
NO. 25
DEC.
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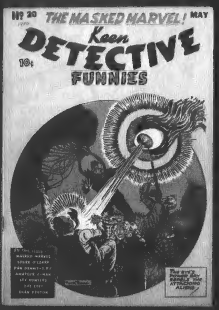
MAN
COMICS
THE ONE AND ONLY AMAZING MAN AID-ED BY TOMMY, THE BOY WONDER, COMES TO THE AID OF A FRIENDLY NATION IN HER HOUR OF TROUBLE!


NO 30
THE MASKED MARVEL!
MAY
Keen
DETECTIVE
FUNNIES
10¢

reprint books by the same name, but after that, was never seen again.

Keen Detective Funnies began in the summer of 1938, and plodded along with lackluster strips until the July 1939 (vol. 2 #7) issue hit the stands. Therein began the "Masked Marvel" by Ben Thompson, and artist most remembered for his backup strip, "Kazar", from *Marvel Mystery Comics*. A scientific genius, the Masked Marvel was capable of creating inventions unknown to the world. Piloting his wonder plane to the trouble spots of the globe, the Marvel pursued criminals with the determination of a zealot. He was able to defeat scheming stamp counterfeiters in one episode, and successfully battled airplane saboteurs in another. While not a big name in the comics field, Thompson was at his best here, portraying the Marvel menacing crooks with his giant shadow, or planning campaigns in his secret lab. Assisted by several G-men types, the Masked Marvel countered multitudes of spies, and even bested a raider submarine, in a typical escapade. Most of the stories were quick paced and pulse pounding, and the Masked Marvel was one of the outstanding characters being published during the period. Ken Ernst's "Gabby Flynn" appeared as a secondary feature in *Keen Detective Funnies*, and it turned out to be a sleuthing strip a notch above the rest. The "Airman" by Harry Sahle managed to get into the last two issues of the run, though the character was never fully realized since *Keen Detective Funnies* folded in September 1940 with its 24th issue.

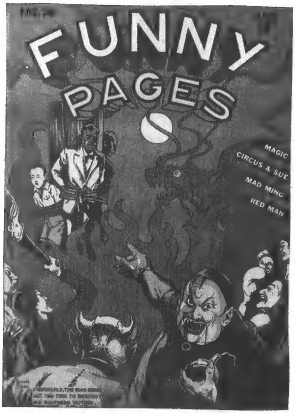
Centaur truly hit paydirt with the debut of the "Amazing Man" strip, which began in issue number 5 (actually #1) of the comic bearing its' name. Cover dated September 1939, this excellent hero started in the hands of Bill Everett, who also did the next six adventures as well. Today, these stories are highly praised by collectors, and deservedly so. Trained by guru-like figures in the mountains of Tibet, the A-Man's greatest asset was his ability to vaporize himself into a "green mist" which enabled him to escape traps and to travel freely. One of A-Man's seven mentors, the "Great Question", possessed quite a mean streak and constantly taunted the hero into doing his evil bidding. A tremendous battle of wills often ensued, resulting in hair-raising adventures as the A-Man struggled not only with his inner self but with the villain as well. Issue #6 (actually #2) contains a classic tale of vacillating good and evil, and demonstrates what a talent like Everett was capable of doing when properly motivated. After Everett's departure, the series continued on with much of the same flavor, though the artwork was never as compelling. (continued)

Beautiful collection of Centaur Comics on facing page. Seen left to right they are -

Top row: **AMAZING-MAN #11 by Bill Everett (Apr 1940), MASKED MARVEL #1 by Sam Gilman (Sep 1940), & KEEN DETECTIVE FUNNIES #23 (1st AIRMAN, Aug 1940).**

Middle Row: **DETECTIVE EYE #2 by Frank Thomas (Dec 1940), FUNNY PAGES V.4 #1 by Harold Delay (Jan 1940), & KEEN DETECTIVE FUNNIES V. 3 #1 by Joe Simon (Jan 1940).**

Bottom Row: **AMAZING MAN #22 by Paul Gustavson (May 1941), AMAZING MAN #25 by Myron Strauss (Dec 1941), & KEEN DETECTIVE FUNNIES #20 by Frank Thomas (May1940).**

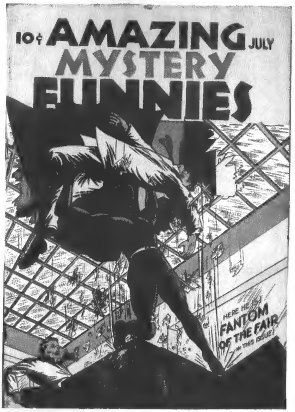


The first issue of *Amazing Man Comics* also introduced the "Iron Skull" by Carl Burgos. As a result of a curious operation, the Skull was a guy with the toughest noggin around. He could deflect bullets which were curiously always aimed at his forehead, or ram through doors with ease. In a subsequent issue (#15), the Skull was injected with serum that turned his entire body into iron. This led to the question "was human or an android?". While the stories were action packed, they never quite captured the imagination like Burgos' "Human Torch" or his excellent "White Streak" (an anti-war robot) in *Target Comics*.

Amazing Man Comics also featured the aquatic adventures of "The Shark" by Louis Glanzman. An underwater Tarzan-type, the Shark possessed hypnotic powers and viewed his adventures on an all-seeing television screen. The "Mighty Man" by Martin Filchock, another feature, was a twelve foot tall giant that certainly deserved his name. The strip was undermined by Filchock's uninspired artwork. Noted illustrator Frank Thomas contributed two nice series. "Chuck Hardy" (a fantasy adventure strip), and "Dr. Hypno", who was a brain specialist, psychologist, and former federal investigator. With these impressive credentials, the good doctor was able to wreak havoc among the criminal community. *Amazing Man Comics* was full of other heroes, which may not have been outstanding, but did manage to maintain a level of quality not often found in other titles. Things did falter towards the end of the run, and *Amazing Man Comics* went down for the count with its 26th issue dated February 1942.

Centaur Comics further distinguished themselves by churning out the most unusual group of heroes ever to appear in comics! Foremost among these was Frank Thomas' "The Eye", which appeared in *Keen Detective Funnies*. An omnipotent floating orb (sans body), the Eye "viewed" evil plots with contempt and enlisted various humans to help defeat wrongdoers. Understandably, the Eye scared the wits out of people in order to move them to "see" its "point of view"! Thomas' cartoony style fit the feature like a glove, making this oddball strip exceptionally appealing.

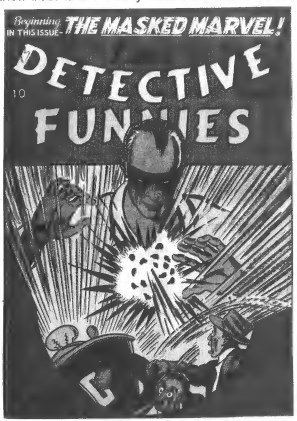
Amazing Mystery Funnies contributed another clever feature, "Speed Centaur". A survivor of a lost race, Speed was aided by a human reporter who "filled him in" on the nasty doings of the underworld. In one scenario, crooks tried to fix the horse racing industry. Speed disguised himself as a

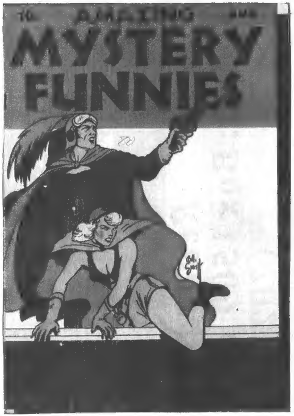


thoroughbred to upset their plans.(not too hard to do when you're half man and half horse!) Artist Malcolm Kildale did a credible job on the series, despite the obvious "handicaps" (groan) inherent in such a character.

Any mention of the "weird" would also have to include the unique talents of Basil Wolverton. His "Space Patrol" series was one of the highlights of *Amazing Mystery Funnies*, but, alas, only a half-dozen episodes appeared. Similar in concept and approach to his "Spacehawk" feature from *Target Comics*, Wolverton depicted the adventures of pilot Nick Nelson and his Martian gunner Kodi with his typical zest. Bizarre planetary aliens and bulging landscapes were common, even though Wolverton managed to sneak in some humor as well. Two Wolverton "Meteor Martin" stories snuck into the final issues of *Amazing Man Comics*, though readers were left hanging as the series was not continued as promised.

As 1940 ushered in a new decade, Centaur suddenly found itself strained. With many of its' top artists doing double duty elsewhere (mainly at Timely), the company's position became increasingly unsure. When their best talent finally cast their lots with the other publishing companies, Centaur became hard pressed to compete. Forced into a transition phase, Centaur started to publish reprint books, focusing on some of their main characters. Centaur then jumped on the patriotic bandwagon with such titles as *Man-O-War*, *Liberty Scouts*, and *Stars and Stripes*, which ran transfer features from *Amazing Man Comics*. Regrettably, these works paled in comparison to their larger competitors, and only a handful of issues were produced.





So, while the superhero floodgates were opening, Centaur sank into oblivion. During its brief life span, this amazing, funny, and mysterious company left behind a legacy of material by some of the most respected names in the field. Centaur Comics were original, captivating, colorful, and exciting! Even though Centaurs are still viewed as relatively obscure by many comic book collectors, their impact on comic book history cannot be ignored. It's an amazing funny mystery that, unlike many of its' talented and famous individual contributors, the Centaur line of comics, itself, did not go on to flourish in the Golden Age of comics!

(Next month, don't miss CBM's tribute to the legendary Alex Schomburg !)

When I was a kid in early 1960's San Diego, I had access to a comic collection somewhat like the Church collection. All were unread, all were from the same distributor . . . let me say that if you laid a bunch of these across a table you would be struck by the crisp uniform look they possessed. Most of the books were from the early '50's; this was our only source in San Diego for pre-code comics. Hero, crime, fantasy, romance, humor, war, and westerns: all were available and the price was a penny apiece. There is one detail I should mention lest this seem too fantastic. The comics were all coverless!

This was the illegal result of an archaic process where unsold newsstand copies were stripped and only the covers sent back to the publishers, cutting postal costs on returns. Maybe it was nefarious to sell these four-color corpses (see example on facing page); at any rate there they were stacked in an old shopping cart in one of those used book shops you don't see enough of nowadays, where wooden shelves, towering over narrow aisles, seem to merge at the top like the arches of some crude cathedral. Here I first encountered Sniffer and the Deadly Dozen from late issues of **Boy Comics**. Sniffer looked like Archie gone badly to seed, and presided over a gang of likable hoods that engaged in elaborate and hilarious cons against their metal-mandibled nemesis, Iron Jaw. Here I obtained **Mister Mystery #7** featuring what might be the greatest sci-fi comic story ever, Basil Wolverton's sensational "The Brain Bats of Venus". And of course there was Atlas. One of my top collecting thrills came two years ago upon receiving **Adventures Into Weird Worlds #27** in the mail. I opened the cover to find my fondest remembered long-time gone penny Atlas. Mort Lawrence drew a scientist peering through a huge bubbling test tube, and that "splash" came to symbolize Atlas for me. The book also contained stories illustrated by Matt Fox and Robert O. Sale; 37 year old Pat was pleased to approve of 12 year old Pat's taste. We called it the "magic shopping cart", for no matter how many stacks of books we bought, it always stayed full and yielded fresh treasures on our next trip. My collecting partners, by the way, were Lane and Gary Carter.

I could go on about this awesome find, the "Sea Level Collection", but I want to talk about "comeback" fans. These are fans who collected as a child and come back, after long absence, to collecting, classically as an adult, with or without the comics of their youth. In my case it was without, and I feel I'm not alone in having memories of stories, of which the issue numbers and sometimes even the comic's title (especially with "Sea Level" books), remain frustratingly unknown. Isn't CBM the perfect place for us "comeback" souls to track down the elusive favorites of our old days? I'm presently hunting two Sniffer stories, one "talking horse" ventriloquism con, and another, of which all I remember, is a story about a cave that leads to baby pterodactyls. Anyone know anything about these two? And Gary and I share a desire to reread a late '50's ACG yarn from **Forbidden Worlds** or **Adventures Into the Unknown**. Gary remembers that the cover story involved a subway train that winds up in another dimension. How about it? Please write if you do. I have no doubt that ye editor can squeeze some queries for your "lost Stories" onto the letters page, as well.

Speaking of killer stories, I just can't get that **Weird Worlds #27** off my mind. The Matt Fox story is a masterpiece about aliens who actually steal the sun. The last panel shows a brick wall with planets crashing in the background, and conveys a richness of philosophical implication rare in this medium. Fox is definitely one of the Atlas "cult" artists. He had a couple of other pre-code solo flights ("I Was a Vampire" in **Uncanny Tales #6** and "The Terrible Trophy", a grisly spoof on collecting, in **Adventures Into Terror #25**) and a handful of "inks only" jobs that also bear his distinctive stamp. One of these, "The Stranger From Space" in **Mystic #24**, is a rare crossover for DC junkies, and features pencils by Gil Kane . Fox "came back" to do a few stories in 1957, just before the Atlas implosion, and yet again to ink a few stories penciled by Larry Leiber (Stan Lee's brother) in early '60's Marvels, back when fantasy fillers still rounded out the hero stuff. Of his style let's just say . . . if you like Wolverton, you'll probably like Matt Fox. See you next time . . . . . Pat

send comments/questions for Pat S. Calhoun to:

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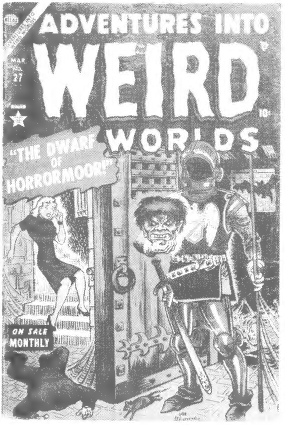
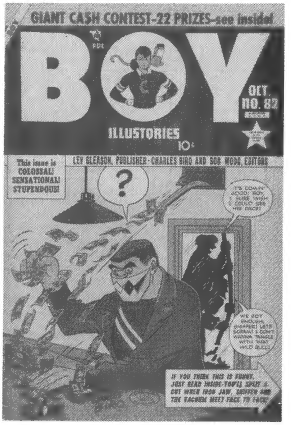
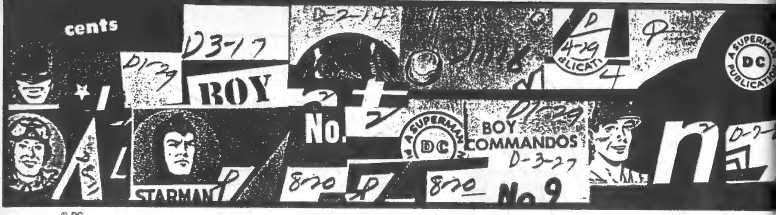
Adventures Into Weird Worlds #27 (below left) and Boy Illustories Vol.1 No.82 (below right). These were typical of the comic books found in the "Magic Shopping Cart" AKA "The Sea Level Collection" (except they were coverless). Also note the warning against the illegal sale of coverless copies and newsstand returns (above) which was located at the top of the first (splash) page of Boy Illustories Vol.1 No. 82. This position was chosen so that the warning would show if the logo (top 1/3 or 1/4 of the cover) was removed. Retailers sent back only the logo (or the entire cover, depending on the publisher) to the wholesaler to get credit for unsold copies. This practice saved the shipping cost of returning the entire comic. Retailers were then supposed to destroy the "remainders". In actuality, many less than honest retailers sold these "remainders" for as much as a nickel each, thus perpetuating a chronic problem of comic book distribution. This is the reason that the condition of many old comics is described as "3/4 cover", "logo missing" or "logo cut". Other companies placed a similar warning at the bottom of the first page, in (or just above) the indicia, which read: *"This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition, nor affixed to, nor as part of any advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever."*




GIANT CASH CONTEST-22 PRIZES-see inside!
BOY
ILLUSTORIES
OCT. NO. 82
LEV GLEASON PUBLISHER-CHARLES BIRO AND BOB WOOD, EDITORS
This issue is COLOSSAL! SENSATIONAL! STUPENDOUS!
?
IT'S DOWN! YOU! BOY, I HOPE YOU LIKE THE PRICE!
WE GOT PACKED! LET'S GET OUTTA HERE! WANNA TRADE WITH THAT HELD BACK?
IF YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY, JUST READ INSIDE-YOU'LL SPLIT A GUT WHEN IRON JAW, SUPPER AND TEN RACKING MEET FACE TO FACE!



© DC

The ULTIMATE PEDIGREE

by

Dr. Pat Kochanek

Surprisingly, in addition to cover art and condition, another important factor influencing what "Mile High" books I personally purchase (and this pertains to books with already unquestioned authenticity) is the presence of distributor arrival date coding. It is ironic that a collector so condition conscious would tend to select the books with pencil marks on them. The "Mile High" distributor coding, however, essentially represents the final "stamp of approval" for long-term authenticity. Without distributor coding authentification is a bit tougher, requiring all of the era-specific "Mile High" characteristics, and a very complete history of ownership. In my opinion, this makes the distributor coded "Mile High" collection books somewhat more valuable. As I hope to convey in this chapter, when present, the predictability of the distributor code for a comic from the "Mile High" collection (within a given era) is remarkable. Typical examples of "Mile High" collection coding will be presented and discussed. Again, I will focus specifically on DC books, although other examples will be used to make a few key points. I also hope to demonstrate that the "Mile High" distributor coding provides some interesting insight into other non-"Mile High" aspects of the Golden Age of comics.

In addition to the lack of handling and remarkable storage conditions of the books, the fact that the comics in the Edgar Church Collection were obtained from 1 or 2 distributors and 1 or 2 local stores adds to the homogeneity of books in the collection. For starters, it is noteworthy that although DC, Timely, Centaur, Fox, Quality, and Fawcett books in the "Mile High" collection appear to have been derived from the same distributor and exhibit arrival dates beginning with the letter D, other companies, most notable Fiction House, Nedor, and Dell, may have originated from an alternative distributor since they bear arrival dates beginning with the letter C. From the DC standpoint, at the very tail end (temporarily) of the "Mile High" collection, a small number of absolutely authentic DC "Mile Highs" exhibit store stamps with the letter C, and an even smaller number of absolutely authentic DCs from the 1953-1955 era have the letter M plus an arrival date (examples of these will be shown). A point, on which both Ron Pussell and I agree, is that only these three distributor coding letters are consistent with "Mile High" collection authenticity ("D", "C", or "M"). For DCs, codes other than D are highly unusual. Let us now look at "Mile High" distributor coding in temporal sequence beginning with the pre-hero books and progressing to the early 1950s books. To avoid upsetting anyone and minimize any potential for someone counterfieting a distributor code on a specific book, all books pictured come from one of three sources; 1) the Gerber Photo Journal guide to Comics, 2) the Carter collection, or 3) my own collection. Thus a picture blueprint exists for the entire cover of each of these books. As you will see, the Gerber book is a must for any pedigreed comic enthusiast. Hell, if you like comics and can breathe, you should own it.

PRE-HERO DC

Many of the oldest DCs from the Edgar Church collection exhibit distributor coding. In early 1937, books were often coded in pencil with a large capital script D (Detective #2, More Fun #19, (both in the Photo Journal Guide), or with a script D followed by the arrival date, month and year (*New Adventure #*s 19, 22, 25 and *More Fun #*s 28, 31, etc., all in the Photo Journal Guide). This type of coding is also found in the very early superhero books of this period (*Superman* #1

in the Photo Journal Guide). In this period, and in the early hero period (1939-1940), small numbers of authentic "Mile High" books were purchased at a second hand book store. These books generally exhibit two diagonal pencil lines along the logo, and/or a script D with a discount price like 8 cents (*More Fun* #17, and *Magic Comics* #s 10, 12, 14, all in the Photo Journal Guide). These are generally termed the "double slash" "Mile Highs" and they are often of very slightly or sometimes significantly lower grade than most books in the collection, although they still have the characteristic smell, suppleness, and white pages. Two DC books in 1938 (and possibly more) exhibit the very intriguing combination of distributor coding and the name CHURCH written in pencil in what appears to be the same handwriting and with the same pencil as the code. These books are *More Fun* #37 and *New Adventure* #26, both pictured in the Photo Journal Guide. It is possible that Edgar Church worked for the distributor, although this is totally speculation on my part. It is one way to also explain how he missed obtaining so few books. Toward the end of the pre-hero era (about 1939), the script D becomes replaced by a printed capital D, again either alone or accompanied by the arrival date (month and day). Examples of this shown in the Photo Journal Guide are *Adventure* #39 and *More Fun* #50, etc.

DC 1940-1942

In early and mid 1940, distributor coding became somewhat spotty in the authentic "Mile High" collection books. When present, it was again similar to the late pre-hero books -- a printed capital D with or without the arrival month and day (Figures 1 and 2). Not infrequently, the arrival date was placed within the logo (Figure 2). Beginning in late 1941, undoubtedly related to the massive increase in the number of new titles and resultant need for the distributors and stores to keep track of their inventory, arrival date coding in the "Mile High" collection is relentless and highly predictable. Of note, D alone (without the arrival date) is rarely seen between 1941 and 1945 (although there are a few exceptions). Beginning anywhere from April to October 1941 (depending on the title), an additional number appears in pencil after the arrival date. This number either appears near the arrival date, or much further along to the right of the cover (Figures 3 and 4). This number almost certainly represents the number of copies which were sent to this (or possibly each) newsstand. This number is informative to Golden Age collectors in general in that it provides an actual index of scarcity for given issues -- scarcity relative to the number of copies of each title that appeared on a given newsstand. As anticipated, the highest copy numbers in "Mile High" coding are seen on the very popular titles like *Action*, *Detective*, and outside of DC, in *Marvel Mystery* and *Whiz*. The highest copy number I have been able to find is 14, which is found on *Action* #52, *Marvel Mystery* #39, and *Whiz Comics* #42 and #45. These are all books in the late 1942 and early 1943 peak WWII sales period. In DC, one can get an idea as to the more popular and more scarcely distributed titles. While 10-14 copies of *Action* and *Detective* were sent to this store in 1942-1943, only about 4 copies of *More Fun* (see#s 78, 87 and 90), 3-4 copies of *Boy Commandos* (see#s 2, 3, and 4), and 4-6 copies of *Star Spangled* (see #s 10, 15, 16, and 24) were sent. *Green Lantern* was a bit more popular than these latter 3 titles in that 4-10 copies were sent to the newsstand (see #s 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8). It is also very clear from looking at the *Marvel Mystery* run in Gerber's Photo Journal Guide that in late 1941 about 6 copies of *Marvel Mystery* (#s 24, 25, and 26) hit this newsstand. This number increased to about 10-12 during 1942, peaked at 12-14 in early 1943 (#s 37, 38, and 39), and then gradually decreased to 2 copies in 1944 -- when coding either stopped or changed format. It is probably more than coincidence that the arrival date coding and copy number coding basically stops in about 1945-1946 in books from the "Mile High" collection. From the distributor's standpoint it probably was not as necessary after the boom WWII years. This is particularly true for Timely in the post WWII era as demonstrated with the *Marvel Mystery* run in Photo Journal Guide; however, it is less true for other titles such as certain DCs. For example, while *Marvel Mystery* was appearing to die out in late 1944, *Star Spangled* was apparently flourishing. The copy numbers for *Star Spangled*, which were generally 4-6 in 1942-1943, were increasing during 1944 and were in the 6-8 range routinely in late 1944 and early 1945, when the coding abruptly stopped. The crime related story theme in these issues was probably more popular than a worn out World War II theme. This information supports the notion put forth by

Harry Thomas and Gary Carter in their "Comic Books Go to War" article in the 1991 Overstreet -- that in particular -- Timely's heros "were basically left in a vacuum after WWII."

DC 1943-1945

Beginning in about March 1943, a thicker lead pencil was used for arrival date and copy number coding in the "Mile Highs" giving a somewhat darker but still the same characteristic coding for this period (Figure 4). In 1944, the same format of coding continued, but the pencil more often than not became thin and somewhat lighter again. Beginning in 1945, the presence of an arrival date became much less common. Coding became quite uncommon and of a much more varied nature after 1945. For example, the last typically coded superhero *More Fun* is #102 (Mar-Apr 1945) and *All Star* is #24 (Spring 1945) etc.

POST WWII DC

After 1945, arrival date coding in DCs and other books from the "Mile High" collection is much less common. When it is present, however, coding exhibits very distinct and again characteristic era specific features. The most common two types of arrival date coding on books from the "Mile High" collection after 1945 are a script D alone, or a script D plus the arrival date (but no copy number). Keep in mind that after 1945, I would estimate that at most, only 20-25% of the authentic "Mile High" DCs are coded with anything.

The script D alone is of several varieties which are highly era specific. For example, a large square script D is seen in mid 1946 (see *Wonder Woman* #17, May-June 1946 and *Marvel Mystery* #72, May, 1946, in the Photo Journal Guide). Of interest, this D is essentially identical to that seen in some of the books in the pre-hero period (see *Detective* #2 in the Photo Journal Guide) suggesting that the same person may have again started writing arrival dates on some books 10 years later. In 1948, when present, the script D alone is generally not square, is somewhat smaller, and can be located anywhere on the cover (see Figure 5, and also see *Flash Comics* #s 97 and 98 in the Photo Journal Guide). After 1949, the D of the script D coded DC "Mile Highs" is usually somewhat larger, but, not square. An example of this is *Adventure* #150 shown in the Photo Journal Guide. Rarely, the D can even be located on the back cover ("Mile High" copy of *Strange Adventures* #22, July 1952, Fig. 6..

The second relatively common type of distributor codes on post 1945 "Mile Highs" is a script D pluss the arrival date. These are often separated by small slash marks as shown in *Batman* #33, Feb-Mar 1947, or *Boy Commandos* #13, Winter 1945, (look carefully) pictured in the Photo Journal Guide and also see Figure 7. This script D (or occasionally a printed D) plus the arrival date was written in grease pencil on some post 1945 authentic "Mile High" books, but this is somewhat more uncommon.

A few types of store stamps are occasionally seen on authentic "Mile Highs", in 1947, and in the 1950s. The two most characteristic are those seen in late 1950 to early 1951 (Denver C-18, see Figure 8), and a D followed by the month and date stamp is occasionally seen. Finally, in the very tail end of the "Mile High" collection an M plus the arrival date is seen (in pencil) on a very few DCs, see the copy of *Congo Bill* #6 pictured in Figure 9.

SUMMARY

Given the above data, an overall distributor arrival date coding scheme for books from the Edgar Church "Mile High" collection can be derived. Remember, this is an overview of the common coding types, but, even considering only DC books, there are many individual exceptions.

An interesting historical point of Golden Age trivia. The arrival dates on books from the "Mile High" collection provide information on the order of arrival at the newsstand (and thus actual age) for the 1940-1944 Golden Age books. For the monthly DCs, based on the "Big Six" advertisement frequently seen in the 1940 DCs (Figure 10), one would expect *More Fun* (on sale the 1st of the month) to be the first arriving and thus oldest book in a given month. This, however, is not true. Based on the "Mile High" coding, the order of arrival is not what would be anticipated. For example, the December 1940 issue of *Flash Comics* arrived about October 15th, the December 1940 *All American* around October 20th, the December 1940 *Action* about October 23rd, the December 1940 *More Fun* about November 1st, and the December 1940 *Detective* around the fifth of November. Thus, the actual numerical value of the dates in the advertisement are correct,

Figure 1. A portion of the cover of the "Mile High" collection copy of More Fun #57 (July 1940) exhibiting a printed D alone distributor code typically seen on DC books in mid 1940. It is speculated by numerous individuals that the D represents the distributor mark of the Denver distribution area; however, this is not certain.

Figure 2. A portion of the cover of the "Mile High" collection copy of Flash Comics #11 (November 1940) showing the other typical distributor coding pattern of DCs in late 1939 until early 1941. A printed D followed by the arrival date (month and day) is seen usually along the upper left hand corner of the book or within the logo. Note that the book arrived at the distributor or newsstand on September 18th, 1940.

Figure 3. A portion of the cover of the "Mile High" collection copy of Flash Comics #33 (Sept 1942) showing the typical distributor coding from DCs in late 1941 thru 1945. The D plus arrival date is followed by an additional number (4, in this case) which almost certainly represents the number of copies distributed to a given store or newsstand.

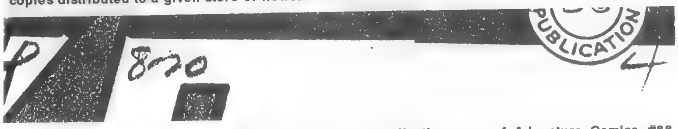


Figure 4. A portion of the cover of the "Mile High" collection copy of Adventure Comics #88 (Oct-Nov, 1943) showing the same distributor coding format as demonstrated in Figure #3. However, a thicker leaded pencil was commonly used in most months in 1943.

Figure 5. A portion of the cover of the "Mile High" collection copy of Green Lantern #34 (Sept-Oct, 1948) depicting the classic script small "D" distributor mark of many of the "Mile High" books coded in 1948. On the whole, authentic "Mile High" collection books from 1948 and 1949 were rarely coded.

Figure 6. A portion of the "Mile High" collection copy of Strange Adventures #22 (July, 1952) showing the classic script "D" seen on quite a few of the distributor coded 1950s "Mile Highs". This book is very unusual in that the code appeared on the back cover.

Figure 7. A portion of the cover of the "Mile High" collection copy of Big Town #3 (March, 1951) demonstrating the other relatively common distributor code seen on post 1945 DC "Mile Highs", namely, a script "D" followed by an arrival date, but no copy number.

Figure 8. A portion of the cover of the "Mile High" copy of Action Comics #151 (December, 1950) showing the characteristic distributor store stamp "DENVER C-18". This is typical of coding in DCs during only a few months in late 1950 and early 1951.

Figure 9. A portion of the cover of the "Mile High" copy of Congo Bill #6 (June-July, 1955). This book illustrates the highly unusual M plus arrival date coding of a few DCs in the mid 1950s – during the last few years that Edgar Church was acquiring books. Of note, only a small percentage of the printed comics from 1954 and beyond were found in the "Mile High" collection. The authenticity of this book is unquestioned in that the entire "Mile High" run of Congo Bill was purchased directly from Chuck Rozanski and was never separated.

DON'T MISS THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF

The Ultimate Pedigree

by Dr. Pat Kochanek

In the August issue of

The COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

others only one month early. In some months, *Flash Comics* can be nearly one month older than the *Detective* of the same month listed by DC on the cover.

In conclusion, from the complexity of the arrival date information presented, one can see that even with coded books it is prudent always to be skeptical and obtain several non-biased expert opinions on "Mile High" authenticity before purchasing (i.e., not just the person selling you the book). This is particularly true for books after 1944-1945 when the classical coding stops. If you read my previous chapter on "Tracking the Mile Highs", you realize that distributor coding is only a supplemental piece of information to go along with documented chain of ownership. Other important era specific and era independent character- istics of authentic books from the "Mile High" collection will be discussed in the next installment of The Ultimate Pedigree in CBM #5.

As with other collectibles, comics (particularly the pedigree and key books) have now entered the price zone where counterfeiting and fraud are encountered. Believe it or not, the information presented in this installment is only a very brief thumbnail sketch of "Mile High" distributor coding nuances. Countless other distributor coding subtleties and exceptions are well known to myself and several other "Mile High" experts. In fact, the distributor coding on the vast majority of the DC "Mile High" books has been documented by me and a few other interested collectors. Equally as important, the location and previous owners of most of the DC (and other company) books from the "Mile High" collection are well known. Remember, just because a nice book has a D arrival date on it does not mean it originated from the "Mile High" collection. Many 1940s books have arrival dates, and coding is only one (albeit significant) factor in proving a book originated from the "Mile High" collection.

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Figure 10. "Big Six" advertisement found in many 1940 DC comics which lists the "order of arrival" at the newsstand. Knowledge of the "Mile High" distributor coding allows for correct interpretation of these dates (see text for details).

NEXT MONTH: Characteristics of authentic "Mile High" comics.

Test your comic book knowledge !

CBM's

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What characters had their origins told between Dec. 1939 and Dec. 1947 in DC's rarest Golden Age title?

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New York, N.Y. --- On December 18, 1991, Sotheby's in New York will hold its first auction of comic book art. The sale will include highlights from all of the major eras of this unique American art form.

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In addition, early and rare "Golden Age", "Mile High" comics, and other first issue and group runs of the first era of the Super Hero comics will be offered. The highlight of this group will be a **Marvel Mystery Concept Cover by Bill Everett** (est. $10/15,000). Also from this era **A Detective Comics # 22 dated December 1938** (est. $5/6,000) and **More Fun Comics #59** (est. $5/6,000) which are both from the "Mile High" Gary Carter Collection, will be featured.

Comic art from the 1950s will include E.C. comics original artwork and rare Walt Disney artwork. "Mile High" titles from the 1950s will also be offered.

The so-called "Silver Age" of 1960s comics will include "White Mountain' Marvel runs and finally, a group of "Underground Comics" will be offered including originals by Crumb, Griffith, Moscoso and S. Clay Wilson.

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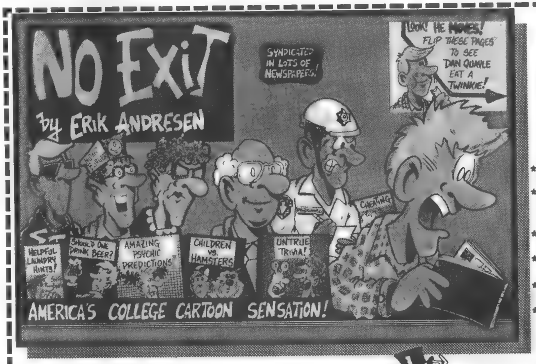
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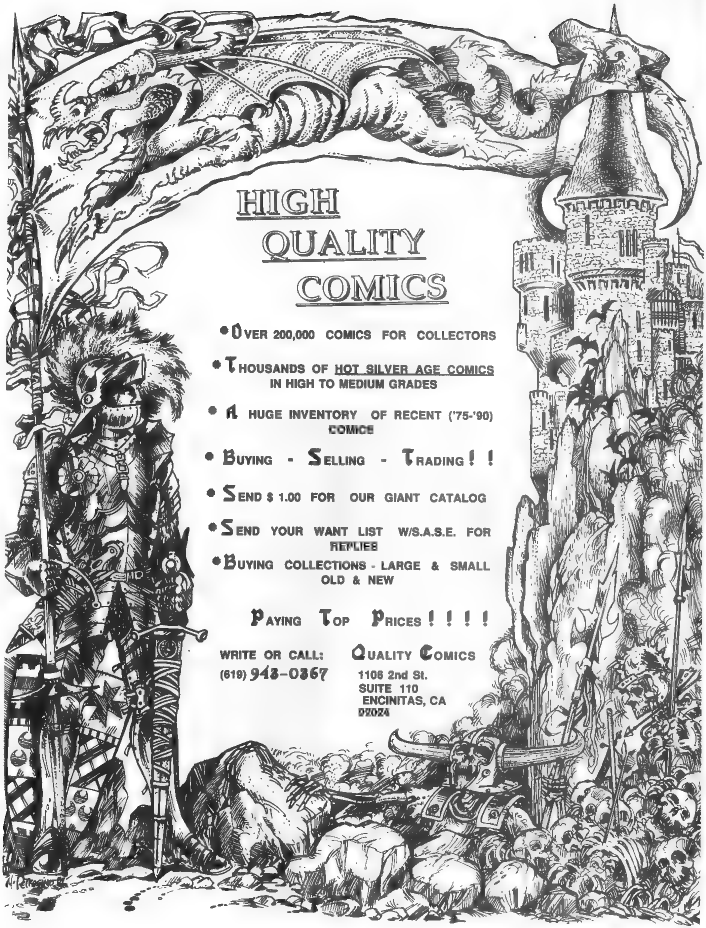
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CBM *presents* SLEEPERS

by **SEAN LINKENBACK**

In keeping with the cover article of this issue of CBM (and last issues list of suggestions), I'd like to call to your attention several more undervalued Centaurs Comics. Before looking at any individual issues published by this incredible company, it's important to remember their historical importance. With the exception of a four issue run of *Wow Comics* in 1936, Centaur Publications and DC Comics were the only publishers to focus on all original strips until 1939. Original material was a very bold move when you consider the fact that reprint comics accounted for more than 90% of all sales. Another astonishing fact is that in mid to late 1938, **Centaur was the dominant publisher of comics**, with no less than eight titles in production compared with DC's four titles. Almost all the early Centaurs contained excellent stories illustrated with great artwork, and certainly deserve a spot in everyone's collection. I suggest the following Centaurs comics for your consideration:

1. **COMIC MAGAZINE #1** (May 1936)
The first comic by what was to become Centaur Publishing. This is a very important historical comic, as it contains part 1 of the origin of Dr. Occult (named Dr. Mystic in this comic) which is continued in *More Fun* #14, the third title of original material.

2 & 3. **FUNNY PAGES V2#6** and **FUNNY PICTURES STORIES V2#6** (March 1938)
The first two issues published after Centaur took over. Tough to find, probably because after a two month hiatus, these issues were not as widely distributed.

4. **ARROW #1** (Oct. 1940)
Centaurs most popular hero receives his own title. Although it reprints stories from *The Funny Pages*, it does sport a beautiful Lubbers cover. Compare the guide price on this hard to find #1 to other #1's from the same time-period (*Red Raven* #1, *Special Edition Captain Marvel, Human Torch* #1, and *All American* #19).

5 & 6. **WESTERN PICTURES STORIES #1 and STAR RANGERS #1** (Feb. 1937)
Tied for first western theme comic, and also only the second and third titles of a single theme.

7. **KEEN DETECTIVE FUNNIES #23** (Aug. 1940)
Centaurs entry into the winged hero field. Certainly not as popular as Hawkman, but popular enough to receive several more cover appearances.

8. **MASKED MARVEL #1** (Sept. 1940)
Centaurs first hero to be granted his own title one month before *Arrow* #1.

9. **KEEN DETECTIVE FUNNIES #1** (July 1938)
Coming out only one month after *Action Comics* #1, and tied as the longest published Centaur series lasting 24 months. Very hard to find in nice shape.

10. **AMAZING MYSTERY FUNNIES #1** (Aug. 1938)
The "other" Centaur title that lasted 24 issues. This issue sports a beautiful Everett cover, and has beautiful artwork throughout the series. Another book that is extremely difficult to find in high grade.

The above, besides being beautiful collectors, still remain quite low priced when compared to other 1930s and early 1940s comics. That about does it for this time. Next month, I'll be back with more insider tips on undervalued comic books and I will also discuss some alternate nominations for the ten most undervalued Golden Age comics as suggested by CBM readers. I do welcome your comments, and if you'd care to share them please send them to me, in care of:

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CBM SPOTLIGHT on
TOM FRENCH

If you have ever sold anything in the dealers room at the San Diego Comic-Con (The largest Comic Book convention in the world) you know the friendly face of the dealer's room coordinator, Tom French! That includes nearly every dealer in fandom. Can you imagine the complicated logistics of placing literally hundreds of dealers from all over the world and monitoring the setup and breakdown of hundreds of display booths and tables. For Tom French (and his lovely wife,

WITH JOE SHUSTER

Virginia) the annual "Comic Convention" is not just a word, its a way of life. But Tom's relationship with comic books is more than the dealer's room. Tom French is a true lover of comic books and their creators from the early days of childhood. When it comes to talking about himself, Tom is a man of few words! Even so, Tom was willing to share a little of his personal history with CBM. 1941 Seven year old Tom reads his first comic books, becoming a fan

WITH MILTON CANIFF

for life. 1949: Fifteen year old Tom alters his birth certificate and joins the army. His mother throws away all his comics. 1969: Tom buys two boxes of comics at a swap meet, two for a nickel. He discovers the wonders of Brave & Bold 28-30, Showcase 22-24, Green Lantern 1-10, and JLA 1-10. Thus begins a 22 year quest for more comics. 1972: Tom buys an Overstreet Price Guide (#2) and is awed by the "high" comic book values. He is also excited to learn that the third

WITH SERGIO ARAGONES

San Diego Comic Con is comig up and plans to attend. "*Just prior to the Con, my mother-in-law passed away. Her funeral was on the first day of the Comic Convention. I had my heart set on attending the opening day of the con, so immediately after the funeral, I made my excuses and rushed to the El Cortez Hotel. Priorities you know. The first dealers I met were a couple of young collectors named Gary and Lane Carter. I picked some nice early Batmans and the rest is*

WITH JOE KUBERT

history." 1973: Tom sets up at the San Diego Con as a comic dealer for the first time. 1974: "*I was a dealer at the Con again, but the dealer's room was not set up. I helped arrange the room. Shel Dorf (founder of the San Diego Comic-Con) suggested that if I wanted the room run right, I should attend the convention committee meetings and make sure it was run right. That year I became the co-coordinator*". 1975: Tom and Virginia are elected to the convention board of directors and become the dealer's room coordinators. 1976: Tom is presented with a coveted "ink pot" award for convention service. Virginia is presented with one the very next year. The San Diego Comic Convention has grown to be the largest in the world. This year, there will be more than 500 booths and tables in the dealers room. If you are lucky enough to attend, you'll note the dealer's room is still running as smoothly as ever! CBM is proud to introduce you to Tom French.

UNDERVALUED DC 1950 - 1969

CBM FORUM with

DR. JOE DUNGAN, J. KEITH CONTARINO, & GARY M. CARTER

As of late, comic enthusiasts have "rediscovered", if you will, the wonderful wealth of DC material from the fifties and sixties. Whether your collecting inclinations include super hero or sci fi, western or war, funny animal or romance, adventure or mystery, DC holds something of interest for every pre Silver Age and Silver Age collector! In this regard, the three "seasoned veterans" listed as contributers for this month's CBM FORUM were recently dicussing what DC to collect in the future, when, during the course of the conversation, a rather interesting question was posed: "In your opinion, what are the ten most undervalued Silver Age DC comics?" As the discussion evolved, it became evident that the question covered such a large area that it required a bit more focus. Thus the question was restated this way: "What are the most undervalued DCs in each of the following three categories?"

Category A:
Jan 1950 until Feb-Mar 1955 ("pre-code 50s DC")
Category B:
Mar-Apr '55 until the last ten cent issues ("post code - ten cent DCs")
Category C:
Dec '61 until Aug '69 twelve cent issues ("twelve cent cover price DCs").

It's no secret that these three categories contain a very large number of scarce and undervalued comics that are already becoming a collecting and investment "mecca" for informed and future thinking collectors all over the world. And because few other collecting areas offer so much opportunity for enjoyment, discovery, investment, and historical appreciation, CBM thought it would be interesting to compile and publish the lists that follow. As you study these compilations please remember that each contributer reseached their lists individually to ensure independent results; that these lists represent the informed opinion of over 60 collective years of experience with DC comics; that some of these selections may suprise you, some you might be expecting, and all might be viewed as potentially excellent investments for the future; that financial/investment considerations aside, simply locating these books can be a collectors dream come true, as the vast majority have great covers, stories, art, and most of all, history; and finally that (lest we forget) high grade (and in some cases, any grade) copies of these wonderful items can surely be considered truly scarce and rare!! With this background in mind, CBM FORUM invites you to peruse each collecor's independent research on the most undervalued DC.

UNDERVALUED DC by Dr. JOE DUNGAN

Category A.

1. ***House Of Mystery #2*** (Rare second issue, black cover, never offered.)
2. ***My Greatest Adventure #1*** (One of DC's rarest pre code comics.)
3. ***Phantom Stranger #2*** (Another rare #2.)
4. ***Sensation #107,#108,#109*** (All of these are virtually never seen.)
5. ***Mystery In Space #19*** (Little known and undervalued book! The ONLY time Virgil Finley drew a complete original story for comics. Beautiful Sci Fi.!!)
6. ***Star Spangled #122*** (Rare first Ghost Breaker issue.)
7. ***Strange Adventures #10*** (Underpriced 2nd Captain Comet with an excellent and stunning cover.)
8. ***Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen #1,#2, #3*** (All pre code, all rare.)
9. ***Mystery In Space #2*** (Another scarce DC #2, great cover and stories.)
10. ***Star Spangled #114*** (Re-tells Robin's origin, scarce.)

Category B.

1. ***Blackhawk #109,#110*** (Rare and inexpensive 2nd and 3rd DC issues.)
2. ***Brave And Bold #35,#36*** (These are a steal at $75 each.)
3. ***Detective #226*** (Really rare 2nd Jonn Jonzz, Manhunter From Mars.)
4. ***Flash #107*** (Almost as rare as #106, but a lot cheaper. 2nd part of the classic Grodd The Super Gorilla trilogy.)
5. ***House Of Secrets #23*** (Scarce 1st Mark Merlin Issue.)
6. ***Justice League Of America #3*** (Prequel to Mystery In Space #75, black cover.)
7. ***Our Army At War #81*** (Extremely tough to find, and in great demand.)
8. ***Showcase #15*** (I consider this one of the books that is nearly impossible to find in high grade and almost unavailable in any grade. With the recent interest in Tales Of The Unexpected #40, it's destined to be an even higher demand book.)
9. ***Showcase #20*** (Real low price, real scarce book, in demand now.)
10. ***Tales Of The Unexpected #40*** (This one is rare. Space Ranger was not on the cover, and therefore was less likely to attract costumed hero fans as buyers. Many collectors in the old days even thought Space Ranger started in #43 vice #40 because of this publication glitch. A very tough to find book in grade and extremely popular with collectors of late.)

Category C.

1. ***Atom#36*** (Second GA Atom at $15?)
2. ***Brave And Bold #61,#62*** (Extremely undervalued!)
3. ***Green Lantern #45*** (Second GA Green Lantern.)
4. ***Flash #151*** ($12? Let's get serious.)
5. ***Hawkman #4*** (Origin and 1st appearance of Zatanna, incredible story and art. This book is a real SA favorite and books at only $45.)
6. ***Justice League Of America #31*** (Hawkman joins the JLA at $16?)
7. ***Metal Men #27*** (Origin Issue for next to nothing.)
8. ***Showcase #55, #56*** (Incredibly low priced, great story and art.)
9. ***Flash #173*** (JLA masterpiece that is still low priced.)
10. ***Mystery In Space #75*** (A real bargain, great follow up story to JLA #3.)

UNDERVALUED DC by J. KEITH CONTARINO

Category A.

1. ***Superman #61*** (Predates *Adventure #210*. First mention of Kryptonite and Superman origin issue. If his dog is worth $1,100, what's Kryptonite worth?)
2. ***Batman #62*** (First origin Catwoman.)
3. ***Batman #78*** (First green-skinned Martian lawman. Hmmm, sound familiar? A steal at $310.)
4. ***Jimmy Olsen #1*** (This book is very hard to find in any grade and is the first minor DC character in his own book. A bargain at $680.)
5. ***My Greatest Adventure #1*** (Another tough #1 and cheap at $370.)
6. ***Sensation #109*** (Last issue, scarce. Toth art. Very inexpensive.)
7. ***World's Finest #94*** (Scarce. Superman/Batman begin as regular team.)
8. ***All Star #57*** (Last issue. Scarce.)
9. ***Our Army At War #1*** (Rare. DC's first war book, way too cheap at $350.)
10. ***Superboy #10*** (First Lana Lang.)

Category B.

1. ***Brave And Bold #34*** (It's almost a giveaway to have DC's third revamped GA superhero, with terrific Kubert art, in a 10 cent book valued at $220. This is a huge landmark issue and is grossly undervalued, especially above Fine. With verified sales of Hawkman #1 at $500, what's this book really worth??)
2. ***Brave And Bold #35,#36*** ($75 each in Mint!!! Buy them at 2-3X that and get rich in two years plus have wonderful stuff to read!)
3. ***House Of Secrets #23*** (Origin Mark Merlin. Not all *that* important when compared to the above, but $21?. Easily a $75 book and maybemore.)
4. ***Showcase #20*** (First Rip Hunter. Another great bargain. This book precedes Rip Hunter #1 by two full years and only Guides $50 higher!! Almost impossible to find in VF or better and well worth $600-700 in NM.)
5. ***Tales Of The Unexpected #40*** (All but impossible to find in any grade. Comparable to Mystery in Space #53. A triple Guide book.)
6. ***Showcase #15*** (A 1958 book!! First appearance of Space Ranger. Another triple Guide book.)
7. ***Tales Of The Unexpected #1*** (Try to find this book above Fine at any price!)
8. ***Superboy #68*** (First Bizarro and way overlooked. Another 1958 book! Rare above F/VF and a steal at double Guide.)
9. ***Brave And Bold #31*** (It was a toss-up between this book and #25, but I think Cave Carsons is better and $50 is crazy cheap for a Mint copy.)
10. ***Wonder Woman #105*** (Even if it's not the first Wonder Girl, it's still scarce and Wonder Woman sure looks cute as a teenager, doesn't she? A book people are requesting more and more.)

Coming in the next issue of CBM:

ALEX SCHOMBURG

"The Golden Age Wizard"

Category C.

1. ***Showcase #55*** (Number 1 is easy. $20??!! This is the first SA book totally devoted to GA character, people!! It's the first reappearance of Solomon Grundy. It's an early GA G.L. appearance and his first solo cross-over. It's got a gorgeous, dark cover and terrific artwork. Buy it now!)
2. ***Showcase #56*** ($10!!! Another beautiful book. First Psyco Pirate.)
3. ***Brave And Bold #61*** (I'm gonna faint! This may be the prettiest cover of the SA with GA characters. Gorgeous deep purple. Reprints cover to Adventure #61 and Flash #92, along with text origins of Starman and Black Canary. Not their first appearances but the *best bargain* in comics today.)
4. ***Brave And Bold #62*** (Also $10. Cover not as nice as #61 but still pretty. In high grade, the pastels seem to shimmer. Has the first reappearance of Wildcat, so may be more valuable than #61 in the long run.)
5. ***Flash #151*** (Why is this book $12 and G.L. #52 $20 & #45 $32? Are G.L. x-overs worth more than Flash that predate them by years? Of course not!)
6. ***Our Army At War #151*** (First appearance of Enemy Ace and very, very sought after.)
7. ***Showcase #57*** (What a cover!! Jet black and foreboding! What art work! What a story! $22--what a joke!!!)
8. ***Showcase #60*** (Still way undervalued in Mint at $55.)
9. ***Superman #199*** (First race with Flash. It's very hot--and $10 is laughable.)
10. ***Justice League Of America #46*** (This was a tough choice, as there are lots of too cheap SA DC's that don't make this list. But, this is the first SA appearance of the Sandman, one of DC's first heroes from way back when. It also has a terrific cover. I chose it because of its low ($22) Guide price!)

UNDERVALUED DC by GARY M. CARTER

Category A.

1. ***Danger Trail #3*** (The rarest DC of the entire decade, the most sensational cover graphics you ever saw!!!! cover to cover Toth at his zenith! An easy number one choice. An awe inspiring, ultra rare, killer of a book!)
2. ***Sensation Mystery #116*** (God awful rare last issue, super low print run, try to get one in any grade. Truly "ungettable".)
3. ***Strange Adventures #10*** (Superbly beautiful cover, best pre code cover of the run, best Capt. Comet cover, second Capt. Comet cover, 52 pager, Wowzers! That green alien jumps right off the cover!)
4. ***Phantom Stranger #6*** (Rarest of all the issues and not broken out in the guide. Please mail all NM copies to me immeadiately for way over book!)
5. ***My Greatest Adventure #1*** (A gem of book, still radically low priced considering its rarity.)
6. ***Jimmy Olsen #1*** (And the #2 and #3. These are MISSION IMPOSSIBLE to find in acceptable condition.)
7. ***Superman #61*** (Sensational book, sensational investment.)
8. ***Congo Bill #2*** (Another real Mission Impossible to find even VG copies!! If you put this on your want list, count on it being there a good long time.)
9. ***Fox and Crow #1*** (A classic by Jim Davis no less. Still cheap.)
10. ***House Of Mystery #2*** (Phenomenal black cover, low print run, major title, a real sleeper, ten times tougher to find than #1.)

UNDERVALUED DC continued

Category B.

1. ***Sugar And Spike #1*** (Maybe the rarest #1 in this category, easily one the rarest DCs of all time with absolutely sensational Sheldon Mayer art!)
2. ***Brave And Bold #35, #36*** (75 bucks in NM???????? for the second and third Hawkman??????? choke, chortle, wheeze, sniff, gafaw, hiccup!!!??? Buy every one you see!!!!!!!!)
3. ***House Of Secrets #23*** (First Mark Merlin and destined to be one of the next "hot" books. Sleepersville!)
4. ***Showcase #19*** (One of the great ones! Last Adam Strange tryout and first with new logo. talk about scarce in high grade. Still way underpriced.)
5. ***Tales Of The Unexpected #40*** (Let me see if I can put this book in perspective. Both Showcase features, Space Ranger and Adam Strange, were placed in Tales Of The Unexpected #40 and Mystery In Space #53, respectively, the same month of the same year. Adam Strange was featured on the cover of his first MIS appearance, Space Ranger's was not on the cover of TOTU #43. Of all the books in all three categories, I'd say this one is about the hottest demand book going right now. In my opinion, easily worth *five times guide* for a genuine NM with white pages. Also #43 is one to watch with its superb cover and first Space Ranger cover appearance!)
6. ***Showcase #11, #12*** (Rare and CHEAP 3rd and 4th Challengers by Kirby.)
7. ***Showcase #3*** (Quasi Sea Devils prototype sans the female character. Magnificsent art by DC's Silver Age legend, Russ Heath! Rare, early number, and actually the first "tryout" Showcase issue. Hot Hot Hot.)
8. ***Brave And Bold #23, #24*** (The first and second "tryout" B & Bs, incredible cover-to-cover Kubert art, incredible stories, incredible low price!)
9. ***Brave And Bold #31*** (First Cave Carson, one of the most memorable and beautiful covers in the entire Silver Age history and "undiscovered". Better grab this one while the gettin' is good)
10. ***Brave And Bold #34*** (see #2 above...choke, chortle, wheeze, sniff, gafaw, hiccup!!!??? buy every one you see!!!!!!!! *The* best buy of the year!)

Category C.

1. ***Showcase #55, #56*** (Easy number one choice for this group, buy every one you see!!!!!!)
2. ***Showcase #61, #64*** (See number one above!!!!!!)
3. ***Brave And Bold #61, #62*** (See number one above above!!!!!!)
4. ***Showcase #36*** (3rd Atom tryout, 1st twelve cent issue, still very cheap.)
5. ***Mystery In Space #75*** (This wonderful book has been overlooked for years and is still inexpensive. This book is destined to be really BIG!)
6. ***Showcase #60*** (One of *THE* key SA books for way less than a $100.)
7. ***Showcase #38*** (2nd Metal Men and as tough to get in high grade as #37 with an outstanding cover. Look at the price difference between #37 and #38, making #38 a real bargain.)
8. ***Justice League Of America #31*** (Hawkman joins JLA for under $20?)
9. ***Hawkman #4*** (Put this one on your want list today! You won't be sorry!)
10. ***Justice League Of America #14*** (Atom joins JLA, black cover, still at a very very low price!)

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Below are a few books we now have for sale:

Action Comics 267 VF/NM+	220.00	Amaz. Spider-Man 19 F/VF	99.00
Adventure Comics 258 VF/NM	59.00	23 VF-	110.00
Batman 171 VF/NM-	195.00	40 VF-	69.00
185 VF/NM	33.00	100 NM	75.00
Green Lantern 16 NM-	79.00	Fantastic Four 48 VF/NM+	195.00
25 NM	65.00	Hulk 181 VF+	185.00
76 VF/NM+	59.00	Iron Man + Submariner 1 NM	125.00
Detective Comics 123 VF	260.00	Silver Surfer 4 VG/F	49.00
127 F/F+	160.00	Strange Tales 77 VF	35.00
164 VG	105.00	Tales of Suspense 39 VF/NM	
Star Spangled 130 (2nd) NM-	28.00	(Some Rest.) Beautiful!	1050.00
Haunt of Fear 10 VF-	125.00	Tales to Astonish 43 F	35.00
Space Family Robinson 2 VF	26.00	X-Men 6 NM	125.00

CBM'S MADE-TO-ORDER-MAIL-ORDER
Presents:

FOREIGN MAILING Ain't So Tough. . .

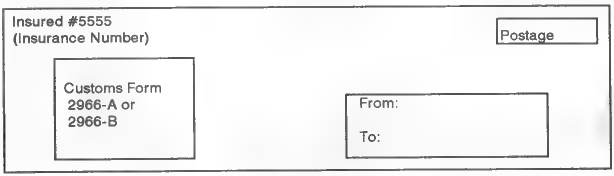
by **WILLIAM M. COLE, P. E.**

I often receive letters from customers in Europe and all over the world. They all ask the same question, "why won't dealers in the United States sell to us?" The answer is really simple. Dealers think it is very difficult and time consuming. They worry about being paid, or they just don't want the hassle of dealing (no pun intended) with foreign orders.

This article will try to "de-myth-tify" shipping to the foreign market and suggest a step by step approach to mailing packages. The examples shown will assume that the shipper has some knowledge of sucurely wrapping packages for shipment.

It is early Monday morning and the mail brings in an order for about $500 worth of Comic Books from a collector in Europe. What do you do? Where do you go for help? It's easy. The first thing to do is to go to your local Post Office and talk with the Postmaster or his authorized representative. Ask them for the *Firm Mailing Book #3877* and a range of numbers for insurance purposes. Find out the best time for dropping off packages. It may be a good idea to affix the postage first and bypass the postal clerk and the line at the Post Office. Next wrap the package securely. Don't use flimsy paper or string. Use corrugated boxes and heavy duty cardboard inserts. Type a shipping label and place it as indicated in Figure 1 below. Second, look up the country of destination, check the maximum weight limit, note the maximum insurance amount, and identify which custom forms are required (see sample forms on the next page). It is important to note that the choice of custom forms is regulated by the country of destination and not by the U.S. Postal Service.

The fun begins if the country you're mailing to has no insurance available. You will likely inform the customer of this fact and offer to send him the merchandise if he will take full responsibility for the package if it is lost or damaged in transit. Don't forget to obtain a Certificate of Mailing. They only cost 50 cents each and provide proof that you did, in fact, send out the package. You probably won't need it, but, it's important to have just in case.



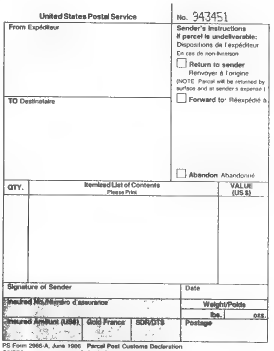
- Figure 1 -

Lets assume for a moment that yourpackage has been insured and shipped properly but, unhappily, it was lost in the mail. All is not lost. Head on back to the Post Office and fill out form #542 which initiates a trace for your lost package. There is a $6 charge for this service. Expect to wait about 4 to 6 weeks for a reply.

Shipping packages, whether within the United States or to a foreign country, can be time consuming and expensive, as many of you already know. A comic book or comic book products dealer must pay his help to fill out forms, take parcels to the Post Office, and pay for boxes and packaging materials. He has overhead costs that may not be obvious to his customers. Shipments that have a stated shipping charge of only $4 may actually cost the dealer as much as 9 or 10 dollars when all the smoke clears. Many customers do not realize this. Most dealer are not trying to overcharge you, they are only trying to recoup legitamate expenses associated with your order.

I sincerely hope this information will be of some value to both dealers and customers and provide a better understanding and appreciation of the process required for shipping to foreign countries. The most important key concept to remember is this: There is no reason to decline orders from foreign customers!

(Editors note: Bill Cole, President of Bill Cole Enterprises, Inc. has worked as a Registered Professional Safety Engineer for over 25 years. He has also been involved in the design and production of materials for the archival storage of paper and other collectibles. CBM is greatful for permission to publish Mr. Cole's excellent information on this extremely pertinent topic. Mr. Cole can be reached at 617-986-2653.)


United States Postal Service

No. 343451

From Expéditeur

Sender's Instructions
If parcel is undeliverable:
Dispositions de l'expéditeur
En cas de non-livraison

☐ Return to sender
Renvoyer à l'origine
(NOTE: Parcel will be returned by surface and at sender's expense.)

☐ Forward to: Réexpédié à

TO Destinataire

☐ Abandon Abandonné

QTY. | Itemized List of Contents Please Print | VALUE (US $)

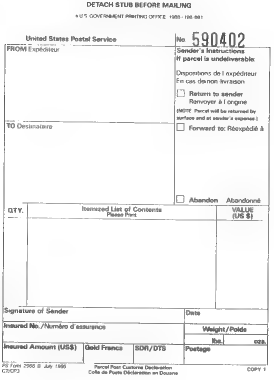
Signature of Sender | Date

Insured No./Numéro d'assurance | Weight/Poids lbs. | ozs.

Insured Amount (US$) | Gold Francs | SDR/DTS | Postage

PS Form 2966-A, June 1996 CD/CP3

Parcel Post Customs Declaration
Colis de Poste Déclaration en Douane


DETACH STUB BEFORE MAILING

United States Postal Service

No. 590402

FROM Expéditeur

Sender's Instructions
If parcel is undeliverable:
Dispositions de l'expéditeur
En cas de non-livraison

☐ Return to sender
Renvoyer à l'origine
(NOTE: Parcel will be returned by surface and at sender's expense.)

☐ Forward to: Réexpédié à

TO Destinataire

☐ Abandon Abandonné

QTY. | Itemized List of Contents Please Print | VALUE (US $)

Signature of Sender | Date

Insured No./Numéro d'assurance | Weight/Poids lbs. | ozs.

Insured Amount (US$) | Gold Francs | SDR/DTS | Postage

PS Form 2966-B July 1996 CD/CP3

Parcel Post Customs Declaration
Colis de Poste Déclaration en Douane

COPY 1

U. S. Postal Forms 2966-A (Left) and 2966-B (Right).

The Fandom Zone

by Alan Dulfon

An ex-comic book collector, with perspiration-soaked forehead and trembling hands, lifts the telephone receiver and presses eleven buttons. A voice that's filled with anticipation and concern—in a ratio of about 65/35—answers. "CCA Hotline."

"Yes, I...I have this terrible urge to get every appearance of Streaky the Super Cat ever published by DC.... I...I passed by a comic store today, and through the window I saw one on the wall in FN+ condition for only 80% of Guide.... Please help me!" And after some time, he's talked out of it. Happens every day in the naked suburbs.

Comic book collecting is a sickness. And the greedy dealers prey on its victims mercilessly. They know we've got to have our fix, our regular scores to fill in the gaps in a collection which actually has no end—like an infinity cover—and keeps us always hanging just at the edge of a reality which grows a little more vague and surreal day by day. We promise ourselves, "As soon as I have the entire run of *Green Lanterns* #1 through 50 along with *Showcase* #22 through 24, my whole collection will be complete, and I'll stop there, a very fulfilled human being. Yeah, that's right. Fulfilled." Then, the day ultimately arrives: we've got it. But then, without even a pause for a momentary rush, "Actually, #52 and 61 also have the Golden Age GL x-ing over, and I really should get #59, of course. That's no problem. Then it'll be really complete. Yeah, that's right. Really complete." Okay, it's there. But..."Actually, #76 is also definitely a key issue—oh, and #87 has the first John Stewart GL. Gotta get those, then it's 100% finitos amigos. Yeah, that's right. 100%." Then, "Actually, all the Adams issues up through #89 are really dynamite." Followed by, "I really like GL in the Justice League too," and "Boy, those old Golden Age *Green Lanterns* are terrific also," and "I really like the Golden Age GL in *All Star* too," and so our lives melt away, and our dying request to our loved ones is that we be buried in a giant Mylar sleeve with an acid-free backing board.

And the problem is the same regardless of what character or title you begin with. Inevitably, it becomes, "Wow, I really liked the Flash x-overs in GL—gotta get some *Flash*es too," and "Great Infantino artwork on the Flash—gotta get some Adam Strange *Mystery in Space*s too," until it gets to the point where it really pays to just try to complete your entire run of Heckle & Jeckle because they've got the same inker who did the issues on the other title you liked that had your favorite writer doing stories done by the artist you're wild about who also drew the other characters you liked which had a similar theme to the ones published by your favorite company. And when you've got every comic book ever pulished since Krishna recited the Bhagavad-gita to Arjuna, then you can get to work on upgrading them.

And everyone knows what an easy mark we comic collectors are. Just a few days ago, as I was walking through a mall I saw a big sign that said NEAR MINT GOLDEN AGE AT VG PRICES. I went inside and it was a shoe store.

Near Mint—I like the way some dealers are so liberal with that term when grading a book. Then you order the book through the mail and find it's as near to mint as Cleveland is to Fort Lauderdale.

Actually, I much prefer the grading system they have over in England:

AI= Absolutely Impeccable (NM)
S= Smashing (VF)
US= Uncontestably Splendid (FN)
JG= Jolly Good (VG)
RA= Rather Appreciable (G)
JSI= Just a smidgen Invigorating (FA)
BWD= Bloody well Debilitated (P).

So what's the solution? Very simple. Marvel absolutely must be convinced to publish a hardcover, slipcased, full-color set of volumes presenting *The Complete Timely Basil Wolverton,* including within it every single strip of Powerhouse Pepper, Doc Rockblock, Flap Flipflop the Flying Flash, Splash Morgan, Piston Pete the Hotel Clerk, Professor Ploop, Foolish Faces, and all the others ever published in *Joker, Gay, Krazy, Kid Komics, Powerhouse Pepper, Tessie the Typist, Millie the Model, Ellie the Escort,* etc. Every comic fan and dealer in the country has to come together on this one as a unanimously unified unit, with total solidarity and commitment, and in their own words make Smilin' Stan and our other good buddies there aware of the twofold benefits of producing such a folio:

1) It would revolutionize the psychiatric profession. Any psychiatrist, psychologist, psychotherapist, or psychoanalyst that kept a set of Wolverton's books right inbetween the books on Freudian and Gestalt methodology—and gave a copy to any patient suffering from anything—would find a dramatic increase in his or her success ratio. As the practice spread, it would invariably lead to a quantum leap in mental health care treatment first nationwide, then worldwide, bringing about a lighter, more well-adjusted Earth planet for everyone for hundreds of generations to come.

2) Marvel would make a pile of money large enough to cushion a fall from a twelve-story building.

Let's get on it now, people. Because tomorrow the new Overstreet Update may come out and change the way we view the world forever.

The Fandom Zone by Alan Dulfan

How a lot of barroom brawls get started

GREAT MOMENTS IN COMIC BOOK COLLECTING HISTORY #1...
1995- FREDDY JOHNSON BECOMES THE FIRST PERSON EVER TO ACTUALLY OPEN A BAGGED, GOLD COVER SPIDERMAN #1...
HEY! ALL THESE PAGES ARE BLANK!

BOB'S COMIC RESTORATION TIPS #1
HEY! I'M BOB! AND I'M GONNA SHOW YA HOW TO ENHANCE THE BEAUTY AND VALUE OF YER COMIC COLLECTION!
NOW LET'S SAY YA GOT AN ACTION #1 WITH A RIP IN THE COVER!
ACTION COMICS
ALL'S YA GOTTA DO IS FIND EVERY OTHER COPY OF ACTION #1 AND RIP THEIR COVERS WORSE!
OOPS.
SOON, YER COPY WILL BE THE BEST IN EXISTENCE, EASILY FETCHING MILE-HIGH PRICES!
WOW! THAT'S THE SMALLEST RIP I'VE EVER SEEN!

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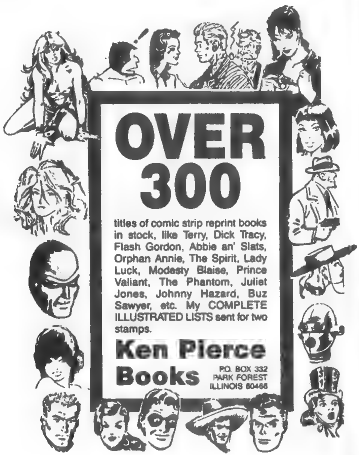
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Letters TO THE EDITOR

Dear Gary,

Thank you, thank you, thank you. I have been collecting Silver Age with a taste of Golden Age for the last four years. Not a heck of a long time but long enough to develop a longing for a fine periodical devoted to the collecting of those fine goodies. What is wonderful about CBM which places it miles above the rest and especially above the "other guys" is that it is made by the hands of some people who obviously love the hobby in general. I find it so difficult to find people who really, truly, undoubtedly love comic books. Sure there are those who collect the new stuff as it comes off the stands and there are indeed a few things worth the money which might even be worth loving, but there is a certain charm that old comics (and to me--especially old DCs) carry. Perhaps the "other guys" may do an okay job of catering to the "new-comics" clientele, but they have left a tremendous amount to be desired from us Silver and Gold collectors. From now on, I'm not going to talk about why the 'other guys' are seriously lame and no longer deserving of my subscription; instead I'm just going to praise you for your superiority in addressing the need which has apparently gone untended for too long. . . that is: a periodical designed specifically for silver and golden age collectors. Those of us who really do love the old stuff for whatever reason (I have many, not the least of which is that great musty/dusty--not rotten mind you--smell which is most apparent when one walks into a comic book convention) have finally found an excellent periodical which addresses our issues and concerns (i.e. "Sleepers' by Sean Linkenback or "The Ultimate Pedigree" by Dr. Kochanek) as we attempt to broaden our understanding of the era from which we collect These articles are penned from the minds of those who love these books. It is comforting indeed to realize that the guys who are supplying us with this vital information are such obvious devotees of these books in the first place--they must be if they know that much about it. Anyway, to make space for all the other letters of commendation that you so much deserve, I'll just end by saying that you are doing a great service to Silver and Golden Age collectors by providing such a well meaning and well realized periodical. Long live CBM (and how!). Now to another topic. Here are my suggestions for undervalued Marvels per J. Kieth Contarino's excellent article in CBM#2.

(1) Strange Tales #110 (first appearance of Dr. Strange, a very enduring character, drawn exquisitely by Ditko and arguably even better than Spidey stuff.)
(2) Strange Tales #111 (harder to find than #110 and for $70.00.....please!!!)
(3) Strange Tales Annual #2 (Ditko and Kirby team-up to draw the Spidey/Torch team-up. Spidey drawn without the spider insignia on his chest on the cover, square bound giant, came out the same time as Spidey #3, first Spidey crossover anywhere, Spidey and Torch battle issue, and for $200???)
(4) Strange Tales #115 (Origin of Dr. Strange.)
(5) Strange Tales #114 (3rd appearance of Dr. Strange, beginning of series, and the first reappearance of a Capt. America Character, somewhat like a pre Avengers #4 tryout issue.)
(6) Avengers #4 (1st Silver Age Cap.)
(7) Avengers #5 (2nd Silver Age appearance of Cap. and harder to find than #4)
(8) Thor #126 (First issue of Thor continued from Journey Into Mystery, preceeds Captain America #100, Hulk #102, Dr. Strange #169, Iron Man #1, and Submariner #1, all by 2 years! Plus a great Kirby Cover.)
(9) Spiderman Annual #2 (Fantastic Dr. Strange and Spidey team-up by Ditko--their creator, squarebound issue, reprints Spidey #1-3)
(10) Spiderman Annual #1 (squarebound)
(11) Fantastic Four Annual #1 (early squarebound)
(12) Fantastic Four Annual #2 (early squarebound, 1st origin of Dr. Doom)
(13) Amazing Adventures/Amazing Adult Fantasy #1-14 (great "pre-hero books with superb art and covers, plus #1 has "Dr. Droom".)
(14) Tales to Astonish #93 (#92 is just a cameo of Silver Surfer, 1st non Fantastic Four Silver Surfer and preceeds Silver Surfer #1.)
(15) Tales To Astonish #44 (1st Wasp, haven't seen anything even close to a high grade copy, true VFN or better must be woth at least two to three times guide.)
(16) Daredeveil #7 (Submariner battle, 1st familiar red costume.)
(17) Submariner #8 (fairly late issue yet contains Thing/Subby battle.)
(18) Journey Into Mystery #112 (Thor/Hulk 1st battle - two "strongest" characters)
(19) Tales To Astonish #100 (book length Subby/Hulk battle issue.)
(20) Strange Tales #125 (not mentioned very often, Torch/Subby battle.)

Mick Rabin, California

(You've really done your homework! Keith and I thank you for the great suggestions! Editor)

Dear Gary,

I was at my local comic shop the other day and noticed your publication. What can I say? It's marvelous! It reminds me of RBCC & TCBG at their best. A subscription for just $12? You bet!

Gary Hackenburg, North Carolina

(We think $12 for a third class sub is pretty reasonable too. It's exciting to think about CBM being distributed to comic shops all over the country. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to both Diamond and Capital distribution companies for this turn of events, as well as the owners of the stores. Not to mention all those collectors who support our fanzine by purchasing CBM from the shops. Also, this issue is being distributed (even as we speak) at the 1991 San Diego Comic Con. And if you include all the paid subscribers, it all that adds up to a pretty incredible circulation in a relatively short time! Editor.)

Dear Editor,

Nice column on the price of back issue Overstreet Price Guides. I learned a lot. I was amazed to learn that there was no Guide in 1971 and that the 1970 was reprinted in a different color. I must admit that it's that kind of attention to detail that makes me glad I subscribed. I wonder if collectors who use other price guides other than Overstreet realize how much time and money they are wasting. Anyone who would use anything else would have to be really out of touch with mainstream collecting. That's my opinion anyway. How about an ongoing update of the Price Guide for Price Guides? In my book, your magazine (fanzine?) is doing it right!

Gene Shackleford, Nebraska

(Are their any other standards by which a knowledgeable collector would price and grade their comics? I don't think so. Every other guide I've seen seems a thinly veiled copy of Mr. Overstreet at best, and at worst had rather inaccurate pricing in my judgement. I price by Overstreet and I grade by Overstreet, but most of all, I have confidence in the conservative, careful, and accurate way in which the Overstreet Price Guide reflects the market. Editor.)

Dear Gary,

A Price Guide for Price Guides was a long overdue tribute to the standard reference book in the field. Overstreet is a comics institution and *the* collectors bible. I love to read the old Overstreet guides. One of my favorite articles is The Pop Hollinger Story from Overstreet #12. This fascinating profile of Harvey Hollinger (1886-1977) tells the nostalgic and touching story of the elderly Kansas man who was a pioneer comic book collector and dealer. "Pop" was a primitive precursor of the modern comic book dealer. I do wish you had included cover art information in the feature. (e.g. #8: Torchy cover by Bill Ward, #15: Captain Marvel cover by C.C. Beck.) May CBM have a long life.

Tim Walters, Oklahoma

(We received an amazing amount of mail regarding the Price Guide For Price Guides article in CBM #2. So much, in fact, that we have decided to update the article on an annual basis, incorporating new information and pricing each time. We will definitely include the data you suggest. Editor.)

Dear Editor,

I liked your Showcase article in issue #3, but I wish you would have extended your comments to include some of the higher numbers such as 45, 55, 56, 60, 61, 64, etc. That type of article is exactly why I subscribe to your fanzine. Keep em comin!

Robert Villalobos, Texas

(Please see the article on rare and undervalued DC in this issue for some of the issues you mentioned, and also maybe take a look at Sean Linkenbacks column as well. We will keep 'em comin'! Editor.)

Dear Gary,

Everything else aside! I got my copy of CBM #3 just this Friday before the Memorial Day weekend as I left for New Hampshire. I grabbed the issue after glancing at it and took it up with me over the weekend. What a remarkable change you have undergone in just three issues! Look, I'm putting these into mylars! What's going on here, this is just a very good Fanzine, right? Wrong! I think that you had better plan on stocking and making available back issues! I just can't believe how much information is packed into this third issue! I firmly believe that new comic book collectors who come into the hobby are going to want to first completely absorb the Overstreet and then move on to other historical writings. If

they have any common sense or curiosity about what is really going on with comic book collecting, they are going to want to read every issue of CBM! What really threw me for a loop was your chart on the relative rarity of the SHOWCASE run! Upon the gra of my old SQUA TRONT writings...this must have taken hours! Yikes! Better than a Larry Bird triple d ble! And this was followed by Pat Kochanek's **excellent** introduction to charting the "Mile High" c mics! Actually **all** the articles are interesting and worth reading! I found myself doing something tha I have never done with CBG, pouring over every single page, and reading everything with interest! A d the ads just get better with each issue. I am amazed at how much energy has developed in CB in so short a time. The article on Bruce Hamilton was well written. And the big surprise of the issue, OLOR! Okay Gary, we get the idea. Every issue of CBM is going to be so good that whatever we all engaged with out here in comic book land, we stop, sit down, and enjoy the latest issue of CBM! ou will notice that I'm finishing a lot of sentences with explanation points! This is true! Overstreet wri g about E.C.'s? Along with all the rest? Its a F - - - - - - great issue! My congratulations! P.S. Yo mentioned to me that many readers like the style of my ads, and that they are visually a lot like the co c ads of the 60's. I find with the price of $87.50 per page, I can take my time in describing material, and give myself room to really talk about what I've got for sale. After all, I've been interested in this great hobby for 30 plus years! Another reason I like CBM!

Jerry Weist, Massachusetts

(Thank you very much for your nice comments! Ga)

Dear Gary,

First of all, let me say how much I enjoyed iss #2 of your magazine (somehow I missed the first issue). I am fairly new at collecting (very new com red to you and your columnists) and I found the articles all extremely interesting, especially since s many other publications seem to take it for granted that everyone either already knows everything ther s to know about the history of comic collecting or doesn't care. I, for one, know very little about col ting in the 60's or early 70's let alone earlier and find it fascinating. For instance, the article about the M High collection finally told me just where these books came from and why they are so highly priz . Thanks a lot and keep up the good work. I'm just starting to get serious about filling in the large ga in my Silver Age Green Lanterns and I'm sure your publication will be very useful. I also have started ollecting original art and would enjoy the opportunity to see what other people have and to how off what I have as well. If this is of interest, let me know.

Lyne Johnson, Connecticut

Dear Gary,

Picked up your 2nd issue of CBM from Past P sent Future Comics in West Palm Beach, and I love it! Finally, a magazine devoted primarily to Golden A e-Silver Age stuff. I've enclosed a check for $13 because I was hoping you'd still have issue #1 a und for sale. I asked several comic stores in my area, and they said they never carried the first issue.

Frank Rohr, Florida

(Regrettably we only have about 25 or so issues o the #1 left, and we only began distribution to shops starting with issue #2. Many subscribers have req ested a copy of #1 and we are glad to oblige until they are gone. We ask that you remit $2 for back issue however, because we can only ship them first class. I'm glad you like our publication enough to colle t it. Thanks for your support! Editor.)

Dear Mr. Carter,

I just finished looking at issue #2 of CBM. Wow! What a great publication you've started. As a new dealer in Silver Age comics CBM is a tremendous resource. The articles by the veterans of the marketplace are especially valuable. These gentlemen have a reservoir of knowledge and experience that CBM allows its readers to tap. Sign me up.

Mike Potter, Oregon

(Glad you liked it, CBM is very proud of the fact that established and knowledgeable collectors have so graciously contributed to our fanzine. We have always believed that if a publication primarily devoted to Golden Age and Silver Age collectors ever got started, it couldn't miss! We also hope that collectors and dealers all over the country will view us the same way you do, as an important recource of historical and market information, as well as a form of enetrtainment. Just between you and me, I get the biggest kick out of all the mail we receive. It is such a pleasure to hear from so many collectors! Editor)

Dear Gary,

I have a few questions for you and your readers. First of all, in CBM #3, Dr. Pat Kochanek mentions in his extremely informative article (entitled "The Ultimate Pedigree") that an important factor in collecting Mile Highs is owning and using the original Mile High master list. I have been trying for quite some time to obtain a copy of this list, but haven't had any luck. Can anyone help me? Secondly, I recently purchased a real sharp copy of Superman #75 with the variant cover reading #74. I'm wondering if anyone knows what percentage of the print run have the misnumbering. Although Overstreet does note the cover variant, its listed value is the same as the regular cover. This seems to imply that the variant is as readily available as the regular. Is this the case, or is the variant undervalued? Last but not least, can you tell me in what month and year DC reduced its page count from 64 to 52 pages? Before I close, I want to thank you for CBM. It's great to have a forum in which I can ask these kind of questions. I don't know how I ever lived without it. Best wishes,

Jeff Delaney, California

(First, although the xeroxing cost my be a bit oppressive, I'll ask Dr. Kochanek to contact you about a list. Second, My brother and I were the ones who reported the Superman #75 with #74 on cover variation to Mr. Overstreet way back when. In our total time collecting DC (30 some odd years) we've seen and/or owned exactly an even dozen copies of Superman #75, three of which were the variant. Given our sample is statistically insignificant, it is still an indicator that we located the standard version about four times as often as the variant. We also keep one of each to claim a complete Superman run while two other collectors we know think that we are being ridiculous for caring. To each is own. The answer to your third inquirey is not so easy. During the paper shortage in WWII, Comics fluctuated all over the place in a seemingly haphazard pattern, but by early 1945 all DCs settled down to 52 pages. One would have a hard time giving a month and year across the board for the page count reduction. The same holds true for the change over from large logos to small logos. DCs patten does not seem to follow any special logic. Sorry I couldn't be more specific on this one, maybe some of our readers could help with some input on this. Thank you for your excellent questions! Editor.)

Dear Gary,

Thanks for the CBM #3 which plonked soundly into my mailbox yesterday. I'll show it to friends and maybe we can make subscribers of them.

Geoffrey Blum, California

(We can use all the subscribers we can get! I hope all our readers will support us with their subscriptions. And I hope all those new subscriptions will plonk soundly into our mailbox. Editor.)

Dear Gary,

I saw the ads in CBM and thought you or your readers might be able to help me find an old comic. I'm looking for an ME comic called "The Avenger". It came out in 1955 under the "A-1" title -- issue #129, 131,133, and 138. The covers were Bob Powell but I think the story art may have been by Dick Ayers. *The specific issue that I'm interested in is Avenger #1 (A-1 #129)* because that's the issue I actually had and can still remember reading after all these years. The condition of the comic doesn't have to be good-- I'm not a collector, I'm just trying to satisfy a nostalgic whim. If any of your readers have a copy for sale, or if anyone has an idea of where one could be found, would you please let me know?

Collin Alscher, California

(Can anybody help? Editor)

Dear Editor,

As a long time fan of Gladstone, I was was immensly interested in the articles on Bruce Hamilton in CBM #4. I especially enjoyed the B.H. Checklist in CBM Spotlight and Pat C. Calhoun's comments. I wish you would tell Mr. Hamilton for me how much myself and my family appreciated the high quality of his magazines and how much I look forward Grave Tales. The artwork pictured on your cover for Grave Tales #1 was a delight to behold. It looks like we can expect another "class act" from Bruce Hamilton.

Celia Barker, Florida

(I agree with your prediction and offer my thanks to Bruce as well. Here's a bit of publishing trivia for your consideration and maybe a scoop as well! The artwork featured in color on the cover of CBM #3 will actually be used as the cover of the new "Dread Of Night" #1, instead of Grave Tales #1. Remember, you heard it here first! Editor.)

Dear CBM,
Do you have issues #1 and #2 available? If so please let me know how to order. Thanks!

Ed Buchman, California

(All back issues of CBM are available at $2 each. At this writing we have about 25 copies of #1 , about 70 copies of #2, and about 200 copies of #3. We are happy to supply them as long as they last. Editor)

Hi Gary,
I have enjoyed the "good old days" flavor of CBM and wish you every success with it. See you in San Diego.

Ed Sobolak (EDIAN), Texas

Dear Gary,
Enclosed please find my subscription to your new magazine. #3 was sheer bliss - "Showcase 1-40", "When Was The Silver Age Anyway", "The Ultimate Pedigree", "Bill Gaines Time Vault", and a five page "Letters To The Editor" feature ! ! ! I haven't had such a specialized read on true collectible comics since Overstreet's Update market report "What's Hot And What's Not". Which might be an idea for CBM - I love nothing better than hearing from dealers on the true trends and market swings, rarity verses sales issues, etc. etc. CBM is a superb effort - VF or better ! !

Jeremy Richards, New Jersey

(We'll try to make our next issue NM. We like your suggestion and Sean Linkenback will be collecting data from dealers all over the world and writing just such a report on Golden Age comics for CBM. I think the Silver Age market reports in the Overstreet Updates can't be topped. I'm very glad you enjoyed our articles. I think it's worthy of note that all the articles and features published in CBM are contributed by COLLECTORS ! And in my book, that makes a real difference. If any of you readers have an idea for an article or feature, or better yet, would like to contribute to CBM, please call or write! Editor)

Dear Gary,
At a time when I am saving up to buy the best collection in my dealer/fan life, I feel compelled to subscribe to your fan magazine. I had been puting off virtually every major and minor expense in my quest for this collection, but some things can't wait like a CBM subscription. I was most impressed with issue #1 as it brought back fond memories of the early Alan Light days. Number 2 had some fascinating articles which I took to heart as a dealer and long time collector/fan. I've just now received #3. The articles about certain rarity were most informative and the details on Bruce Hamilton, a friend I've known for more than 20 years, were more than I had previously known about this giant man of comic influence! In my 20 plus years devoted to comic fandom, I've never seen any magazine, fan letter, or whatever, to be so thoughtful, so informative, and so much of a delight to read and re-read; and your only at issue #3! If each issue keeps getting better, I can't imagine how enjoyable CBM will be over the next year, decade, eon! Best wishes for continued success. Thanks for such new found reading pleasure, and see you in San Diego!

Marty Hay, Arizona

(The whole staff of CBM was deeply appreciative of your letter, Marty, and we promise to keep up the good work. A veritable flood of letters contained a similar point of view regarding the articles on Mr. Hamilton. Few people have made such a positive impact on so many comic fans as Bruce. Editor)

Dear Gary,
The Showcase article was fantastic. Do one on the Brave And The Bold next. I also think this could grow into a great index type column, e.g. Green Lantern, Our Army At War, Atom, etc. Also, my vote for the hardest comic book to find for sale is HIT COMICS #5. This, with 20 years of searching for this book, never in mint. Was there a Mile High Copy? Continued success!

Chris Lennen, California

(You are not the only one to suggest the scarcity of the #5 issue. Two other avid collector's of HIT COMICS (that I'm aquainted with) have said the same thing. One indicated that he has been looking for a high grade copy for more than 16 years, the other said he's been desperately searching for more than 10 years! Does anyone out there know what might contribute to this book's scarcity? Also, the Showcase article went over so well that a second article is in the works right now, entitled "The Relative Rarity And Demand Of Brave And The Bold 23-49". Avid collectors of Brave & Bold, please call us. Editor.)

Dear Gary,
Read CBM and found it very interesting. I think this may be just what the market needs.

Hal Kinney (THE BOOKIE), Connecticut

Hi Gary,
Here's my money for a subscription to CBM. Glad to see this publication, as my interests run to Golden Age and Silver Age comics mainly. I've been collecting since 1969 and have always been intensely interested in the history of comic books (and strips), being a unique and distinctive American phenomenon. Comic have always been an underappreciated part of our national heritage, and interestingly, are now an international phenomenon. Best of luck on the publication.

Ted Vanliew, Massachusetts

(You bet! Please see the article on Centaur Comics some comic book history. Also, I am happy to announce that Ted, a comic aficionado in his own right, will be writing for future issues of CBM. Editor.)

Dear Mr. Carter,
Enclosed is my check for one year's subscription to CBM. I'd also like to add that your magazine meets my particular interest/needs better than any existing publication of which I'm aware. Your focus on the Golden and Silver ages is much appreciated. As my interest is in high-grade Silver Age material, I'd like one of your contributing writers to address the question of understanding the availability of key comics. I'm wondering if there are definable cycles, such as the state of the economy, or shifts in . Overstreet pricing, which release key comics back into the marketplace. One dealer told me his own theory: "For every collector who keeps keys for 10 years, there are ten who keep them for 1 year, and then for various reasons have to sell." Any thoughtful article on this would be helpful. Thanks again, and good luck on your venture.

Dr. John Townsend, California

(An excellent suggestion for an article which I am passing along to several knowledgeable and experienced contributing collector/writers. I would like to add that my personal perspective is a bit different from the dealers theory. My experience has been that collectors who own comics have a tendency to hang on to their prize collectibles at all costs, regardless of fluctuations in the economy (for the most part). In fact, I see demand for rare and scarce Golden Age and Silver Age material continually rise with little or no correlation to economic conditions, while collectors continue to hold onto their key books knowing they will probably never get the opportunity to get them back, if they ever sell. A number of dealers across the country recently predicted that "a ton of good stuff will come out of the woodwork during the recession". A few things did, a ton did not. In fact, there is still not enough decent shape Golden Age and (especially) Silver Age material to meet demand. Just look at the recent record setting increases in the going rate of 1950s DC. Who knows how high this will go now that collectors are discovering how relatively inexpensive these comics actually are??? (A group of local 50s collectors have jokingly asked that we stop discussing this in print, "at least until we finish our respective collections.") Another indicator of scarcity is the fact that many major dealers and collectors have significantly increased the percentage of Overstreet they will pay for pre 1970 comics. Why would dealers pay more if there were ample supply? Plus, soon we will witness a most important historical event,The gigantic Sotheby's auction of comic books coming up in December 1991 in New York. It's no secret that most of fandom expects record prices on EVERYTHING in that auction, without regard to economic conditions. It has been historically proven that collectibles are in demand both when times are good (plenty of extra cash to indulge our hobbies)and when times aren't so good (investors looking for hedges against inflation). From where I sit, if a high grade key book comes up for sale for whatever reasons, it's important to realize its a pretty rare event and even more important to jump at the opportunity while you've got the chance! But that's just my opinion. Thanks for asking an excellent question! Editor.)

Dear Editor,
I'd like to hear Pat Calhoun's suggestions on which Atlas comics to buy first. As a long time Marvel collector who has just about completed everthing from 1961 up, I'm expanding my want list to include the so called "pre-hero" Marvels and their "forefathers" the Atlas group. I'd like to know which issues Pat feels are the "gems" to pick up first.

Don Lewis, Ohio

(Pat indicated that he is planning to discuss all that you have suggested in an upcomng column! Editor.)

Send your letters to: CBM, P.O. Box 180900, Coronado CA 92178-0900